

## TOWARDS DECRIMINALIZATION OF SUICIDE : A BIG STEP FORWARD

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Suicide is a major problem worldwide with about 8 lakh people dying by suicide every year. For every death due to a completed suicide, there are about 20 suicide attempts.<sup>1</sup> Thus, what gets reported is just the tip of the iceberg. One of the major causes of underreporting of suicide in our country is the legal status of suicide. According to Article 309 of IPC, anyone who attempts suicide may face simple imprisonment upto 1 year or fine or both. As a result, many cases of attempted suicide either do not get reported or are labeled as "accidental poisoning". This has two important ramifications. Due to underreporting, the nature and extent of the problem in our country remains underemphasized. Secondly, the person who has attempted suicide is deprived of attention of a mental health professional, which could have reduced chances of a future attempt.

Decriminalization of suicide has been done by all developed countries and also by our neighbouring country Sri Lanka way back in 1995. Fortunately, the new Mental Health Care Bill (MHCB) seeks to redress this long-standing legal malady which is a leftover of the British Raj! Section 124 of MHCB states that a person who attempts suicide shall not be punished under IPC as he would be presumed to be suffering from mental illness and treated with due care and consideration. Once this becomes a law (a matter of time), it will prove to be a significant step in suicide prevention in our country!

### REFERENCES :

1. Preventing Suicide : A Global Imperative(2014) WHO Publication.

